

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD
7TH NOVEMBER 2017 AT 2:00PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION**

PRESENT:

Professor Pete Downes (Chair), Alistair Cameron, Dr Siobhán Jordan, Dr Stuart Fancey, Professor Donald MacRae, Lynn Mann, Gary Bannon, Jo Bisset, Professor Andrea Nolan (dialling in), Donna Chisholm (dialling in)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Suzanne Dawson, Interface; Laura Goodfellow, Interface; Laura Hegarty, Interface (minutes).

1 APOLOGIES

Andrew Bissell, George Baxter, Marc Crothall, Bill McBride, John Rogers, Jim Watson

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board. He noted the apologies as above and that Andrew Bissell had stepped down from the Strategic Board due to his business commitments. A process of recruiting a replacement will be initiated in due course and suggestions from Board members were most welcome.

3. ORAL UPDATES

Professor Pete Downes provided the following updates:

- This was his last meeting after 5 years as Chair of the Interface Strategic Board. It has been a privilege to be associated with the development of Interface over the period.
- Innovation continues to play a key role in Scotland's strategy and Interface is central to future developments.
- The ambitious five-year plan that has been developed by the Board will deliver a step change for the next phase of Interface's development.
- He confirmed that Prof Andrea Nolan had been pleased to take on the role as Chair of the Strategic Board from Jan 2018.

Dr Siobhán Jordan updated the Board on the following:

- The opportunity to present the results from the Biggar economic review of activities supported by Interface to Ministers Shirley Anne Somerville [Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science] and Paul Wheelhouse [Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy] in September was very welcome. Mr. Wheelhouse had noted his interest in the "long tail" of businesses that were new to innovation and the central role of Interface in growing their ambition through collaboration with academia.
- Mr. Paul Wheelhouse is a confirmed speaker at the Scottish Knowledge exchange awards on 22nd Feb 2018.
- The Interface team has established enhanced co-operation with Colleges in particular arranging workshops to support the pipeline of Innovation Vouchers ideas to actual applications.
- The Chief Executive of Innovate UK Dr Ruth McKernan visited the Interface offices and was keen to work with Innovation partners to enhance the success rate of Scottish companies to lever a greater share of Innovate UK funding.

4. MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING (PAPER 1)

The Board agreed that the minutes (Paper 1) were a true and accurate reflection of the discussions held on 31st August 2017. They noted the progress of the actions via the tracker and that all were now completed.

5. INTERFACE BUSINESS PLAN (PAPER 2)

Siobhán introduced Paper 2 which set out the Interface draft business plan for 2018-2023.

She explained that the ambitious plan had been developed following considerable stakeholder consultation including the Board Strategic planning day in Aug 2017 and input from Universities Scotland.

Underpinning principles were a step change in the numbers of businesses supported, efficiencies through deployment of digital approaches and streamlined approaches working in partnership with other actors in the innovation ecosystem in line with the recommendations from the recent Enterprise and skills review.

The Board noted the following: -

- There was a need to recognise and sustain Interface's role in supporting innovation in Scotland through longer term commitment.
- The Biggar report highlighted that Interface is extremely good at what it does and they proposed no fundamental changes were required to the current business model for future service delivery.
- The proposed economic impacts provided a realistic measure of outcomes and had been forecasted by Biggar Economics Ltd based on their recent independent evaluation.
- The key assets within Interface – trusted brand, relationship management capabilities and staff knowledge – were fundamental to delivering the ambitious plans.
- The step change in level of activities would be achieved through a combination of factors including economies of scale, efficiencies resulting from enhanced digital management systems, high quality of referrals from intermediaries, growth in multi-party collaborative projects and the compound effect of “stickier relationships” leading to repeat business and additional outcomes.

In looking ahead, the Board highlighted: -

- The opportunities to further influence intermediaries within the ecosystem as sources of new referrals including professional services [accountants, lawyers etc.] and Business Gateway staff.
- The opportunity for the SFC, SE and HIE and Board members to play an advocacy role and promote the outputs from Interface to the new Strategic Board chaired by Nora Senior.
- Lynn Mann highlighted her membership of the National Council for rural advisors¹ which was announced at the Royal Highland Show on 22nd June 2017 and the opportunity to influence their strategy for growth through Interface case studies. **Action LM/LG**

The discussion concluded with an update on next steps from the funders which will include a presentation to the SFC Research and Knowledge exchange committee on 23rd November 2017.

6. INTERFACE CONTRIBUTION TO INNOVATION SCOTLAND FORUM ACTION PLAN (PAPER 3)

The Board noted the considerable co-operation across the range of organisations and the key contribution from Interface to deliver the Innovation Scotland Forum action plan. They noted learnings for Interface from the engagement with Industry leadership groups. The role of Interface in supporting the University Innovation Fund outcomes was a key legacy of the action plan.

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/NationalCouncilofRuralAdvisers>

7. UPDATED RISK REGISTER (PAPER 4)

SD introduced the risk register noting the minor changes in mitigating actions from the last review. The Board noted the inter-dependencies by Interface to deliver and the importance of the capability and capacity within Universities. They suggested that the risk register could be presented diagrammatically to demonstrate the reduction in risks through the mitigating actions

Action SD

8. PROGRESS UPDATE (PAPER 5)

The Board noted the paper outlining operational progress from August 2017 – October 2017. AC suggested that a dashboard of referrals would be very helpful to include in future progress reports.

Action LG

9. AOB

No other matters were raised, and the meeting concluded at 4:00pm

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 8th February 2018 2-4pm, Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation.

APPENDIX ONE ACTION TRACKER [as of 7th November 2017]

No.	Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
1	31 st August 2017	INDEPENDENT REVIEWS	Consider what features of University interactions occur most commonly to deliver lasting partnerships with businesses (from BiGGAR economics review and other studies)	Ongoing	Limited data from BiGGAR interviews. Paper on key attributes being prepared for Board meeting in Feb 2018	Executive
2	7 th Nov 2017	INTERFACE BUSINESS PLAN	Share relevant Interface case studies with National Council for Rural Advisors	Complete	Case studies sent to Lynn	Executive
3	7 th Nov 2017	RISK REGISTER	Present risk register diagrammatically to demonstrate the reduction in risks through the mitigating actions	Ongoing	See below	Executive
4	7 th Nov 2017	PROGRESS UPDATE	Include dashboard of referrals in future progress reports	Ongoing	See Paper 3	Executive